

***SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING – APRIL 29, 2014
MINUTES***

A Special City Council meeting was called to order by Mayor Mike Gamache, April 29, 2014, 6:15 p.m., at the Andover City Hall, 1685 Crosstown Boulevard NW, Andover, Minnesota.

Councilmembers present: Mike Knight, Sheri Bukkila, Julie Trude and Tony Howard
Councilmember absent: None
Also present: City Administrator, Jim Dickinson
Others

***PRESENTATION/MORRIS LEATHERMAN GROUP/2014 CITY OF ANDOVER
COMMUNITY SURVEY***

Mr. Dickinson stated the City commissioned a Community Quality of Life Survey this spring. He introduced Mr. Bill Morris and Mr. Peter Leatherman of the Morris Leatherman Group.

Mr. Bill Morris thanked the City Council for meeting with them. He stated they spoke with 400 randomly selected households across the community. The non-response rate was a very low, three percent, the normal non-response rate in surveys of this type is thirty percent. It took approximately 28 minutes on average to complete the phone survey.

In general what they found in the survey that Andover is one of the best functioning communities that they work with across Anoka County and the Twin Cities Metro. People are satisfied with the way things are going and optimistic about the future and they are very upbeat about current issues that may be facing the community, but even more optimistic about the kinds of things that might greet the community in the future.

Survey Results

Quality of Life Rating – 97 percent indicated they thought the quality of life rating was either excellent or good. 3 percent thought it was fair to poor which is one of the lowest percentages across the Metro Area.

Like Most About the City – There were some changes to this question since it was last surveyed in 2006. Small town feel went from 6 percent to 22 percent. Housing and neighborhood identity shrank a little from 23 to 15 percent. Most residents do not feel that Andover is considered a suburb anymore, many residents see Andover as a small town near a large city. They like the rural areas and the quietness of the City.

Most Serious Issue – Street repair, infrastructure has become a concern through the metropolitan area and residents polled went from 2 percent in 2006 to 20 percent in 2014. Growth went up from 11 percent to 31 percent.

Sense of Community Pride – Minor changes from 2006, 90 percent indicating the sense of community pride is good or excellent, only 10 percent indicate less. Andover is well above the suburban norm and people are very pleased with the community and where it is evolving to.

Characteristics of City – With very few exceptions they are in the majority in terms of each of the characteristics they asked about what the City has enough of. There is only one characteristic that gets above the 20 percent of too much threshold which is higher cost housing. People would like to see more entertainment, dining and retail shopping in the community. People are shifting away from residential development and looking at the kinds of things that would make this a more complete community. 31 percent would like to see more service establishments in the City, 34 percent would like to see association run single level senior housing, senior assisted living and nursing homes. Many of the people polled for this came from the 45 to 54 year old range, they are worried about if they can stay in the City for the remainder of their lives. They would like to stay in the City and would like to also have starter homes available for their children. There is a generational relationship going on.

City Service Rating – The only place they have a lot of red on this survey is city street repair/maintenance. Basic City services are all regarded superbly.

Property Taxes – Andover is one of the few communities where property tax concerns have remained unchanged since the 2006 survey. 40 percent rate property taxes comparatively on the high side. 51 percent feel they are about average and about 3 percent feel they are low.

Services Kept Pace with Growth – 94 percent feel the services have kept pace with growth and people feel that the services are still very good and high quality. He stated this is the highest they have ever had in comparison to other communities.

Value of City Services – 84 percent feel the City services have been high quality.

Public Safety Concerns – 41 percent of those polled felt that traffic speeding is one of the most serious or second most serious public safety issue in the City. Another concern is youth crime and vandalism coming in at 40 percent.

Amount of Neighborhood Patrolling – 71 percent of those polled felt that the amount of neighborhood patrolling is about right, 28 percent felt it is not enough.

Neighborhood Traffic Speeding – 35 percent felt that neighborhood traffic speeding is somewhat serious, where 27 percent felt it is not too serious.

Walk Alone at Night in Neighborhood – 47 percent of those polled feel that it is very safe to

walk alone at night which went up from 40 percent in the 2006 survey. 44 percent felt it is reasonably safe which went down from 51 percent in the 2006 survey.

Intra-City Travel – 66 percent felt this was satisfactory which went down a little from 2006. 27 percent felt it was excellent.

Commute Time and Method – Commute times are down from 26 minutes in 2006 to 17.5 minutes. 91 percent of people drive alone but if convenient, 19 percent are willing to use public transit, 80 percent are not willing to use public transit.

Vehicle Overpass – 40 percent do not support a vehicle overpass and 32 percent support one.

More Active Code Enforcement – 45 percent want a more active code enforcement whereas 50 percent would oppose it.

Code Enforcement – Most of the code enforcement types are above 80 percent which is about right. The only one type that should have more code enforcement is related to junk cars.

Importance of Natural Resources Issues – 90 percent feel that it is very important or somewhat important, almost half, 46 percent feel it is very important to them and only 10 percent feel it is not important. Andover has always been considered a green city.

Greatest Environmental Issue – There are two items that are tied at 24 percent, one is protecting water resources and the other is preserving open space. There is a growing concern about invasive insects and those kinds of diseases and protecting trees.

Open Space Program Awareness – 51 percent are aware of the Open Space Program and 49 percent are not aware. The program needs to be publicized more.

Open Space Areas – Only 49 percent expressed awareness of open spaces in the City and 61 percent of the 49 percent have visited them. There seems to be an information deficit going on and needs to be advertised more. Councilmember Trude noted Bunker Park is located partially in Andover.

Open Space Public Accessibility – 80 percent of those polled believe the open space areas need to be accessible to the public.

Open Space Area Preference – 55 percent would like to see larger but fewer open space areas and 33 percent would prefer smaller ones but more of them in the City.

City Trails – only 18 percent indicate their household never use City trails which indicates a high usership compared to other communities. 25 percent indicated they use the city trails frequently, with 40 percent indicating occasionally and 17 percent use them rarely. 58 percent use them for walking, 18 percent running and 24 percent are used for biking.

Additional Funding – 71 percent would support additional funding for City trails with 29 percent opposing. There is no tax figure placed on this but those polled would be open to a discussion. Regarding the teen center, there is almost the same profile. 69 percent indicated they would be open to discussion of additional funding for a teen center, where 24 percent indicating they would be opposed.

City Park and Recreation Facilities – 75 percent felt the city park and recreation facilities are good and 17 percent felt they are excellent, 5 percent felt they are fair.

Use of Park and Recreation Facilities – 41 percent use them occasionally, 24 percent frequently, 14 percent rarely use them and 20 percent never use them. 41 percent use the facilities for exercise, 28 percent for playground and 12 percent use the community center. 18 percent use the ballfields and 2 percent use them for gatherings.

Comparison of Facilities to Other Communities – 38 percent feel the parks system is better and 2 percent felt they are worse. This compares very favorably to other communities.

Community Center Usage – 51 percent of those polled have not used the community center in the past year and 49 percent have used it. 41 percent feel the community center is excellent and 57 percent feel it is good.

Satisfaction with Community Center Offerings – 52 percent feel very satisfied and 46 percent feel somewhat satisfied and 2 percent are not too satisfied.

Park Bond Referendum – 41 percent of those polled would not want to have their property taxes increased for a park improvements, 27 percent would be willing to have their taxes increased by \$10 per year, 13 percent would feel ok with increasing taxes by \$20 per year and 8 percent would be ok with increasing taxes by \$100 per year.

Sources of Information – 71 percent felt the City newsletter is their primary source of information about the City and 70 percent felt the newsletter was their preferred choice to receive information about the City.

“Andover Today” – 92 percent of those polled received the newsletter and 50 percent read all of it and 41 percent feel it is an excellent source of information where 49 percent felt it was good.

Cable Television – 46 percent of people do not subscribe to cable tv and 55 percent subscribe. 58 percent never watch City Council or Commission meetings.

City Website – 89 percent have internet access and 52 percent have viewed the City’s website.

Subscribe to E-Mails for News and Information – 28 percent are very interested, 35 percent are somewhat interested, 15 percent are not too interested and 21 percent are not at all interested.

Communication Performance – 71 percent felt the communication is good, 15 percent felt it was excellent and 10 percent felt it was fair with 2 percent at poor.

Mr. Morris stated overall he did not expect to see the improvements to the 2006 survey because they were already so high across the board and that is exactly what they found again in the 2014 survey. The City service ratings are very high, the trust in government and ratings of government are also high. The booster group has improved dramatically. People really do have a resilience and trust in what the City is doing, both city government and staff. As they move forward, they have the booster core which is huge, which is willing to give them the benefit of the doubt and will not be negative. They expect the City will do as well as they have done in the past and in terms of retrospective evaluations of the past, those evaluations are premium. This is probably one of the two or three really well functioning cities they work with in the metro area.

Councilmember Knight asked if they took into consideration the age demographics. Mr. Morris stated they did and ask an entire panel of demographic questions and if there were any major deviations among groups he would have referred to them in the presentation.

Councilmember Knight asked where in the twenty year cycle is Andover at. Mr. Morris stated in terms of development and how the people want to see the City proceed they have moved from type one development, which is an overall concern about housing to type two development, which is more the amenities. That has been a major shift from 2006 to 2014.

Councilmember Trude felt there are some things they can learn from this survey that they were looking at doing.

Councilmember Trude stated she was looking at people wanting to have more senior housing and she would have never thought that because she was looking at younger people moving in and using the amenities. She thought that was good to know for future planning.

Councilmember Bukkila stated as far as the City profile goes, they have some urban and it is almost split with the more rural feeling. She wondered if there was a divide there in the ways people responded. Mr. Morris stated distance did impact somewhat, particularly on those who were the furthest away from the amenities. He stated they did look at location. The thing that unifies people is the fact that both groups tended to really value the small town ambiance.

Mayor Gamache thought in 2020 they could see some of the ratings go down with Andover adding amenities that the residents want now. Mr. Morris stated they have found in a number of surveys and taken a detailed look at big box retail and have found that the combination or the type of big box retail that tends to really down the ratings is if it becomes too concentrated in one area of the community.

Councilmember Howard thought they have done a really good job as a community of balancing services. He stated if they have more affordable housing, they have to put them tighter and change the ordinance to make that happen and to keep the community. This is really a balancing

act to try to keep the feel of what we have now.

Mayor Gamache thanked Mr. Morris and Mr. Leatherman for the survey discussion.

Councilmember Trude asked Mr. Morris how many people were contacted on their cell phones versus land lines. Mr. Morris indicated they actually contacted 32 percent of the residents on their cell phones. They were cell phone only households. The vast majority of those surveyed have both land lines and cell phones.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Knight, Seconded by Bukkila, to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Osbeck, Recording Secretary